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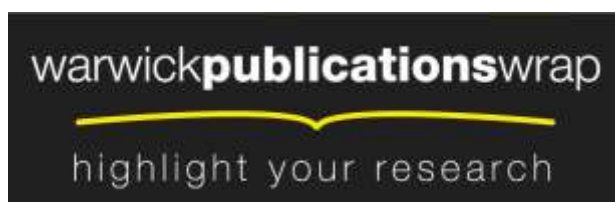
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Internal diversity in Buddhism: Comparing the values of Buddhist teens raised by heritage & convert parents

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Internal diversity in Buddhism: Comparing the values of Buddhist teens raised by heritage & convert parents

Abstract

Self-assigned religious affiliation has been linked to different extents with other aspects of religiosity in Christians, but this correlation has not previously been studied for Buddhists. In this study, relevant attitudes were examined through focus groups conducted with 75 heritage and convert-raised Buddhist teenagers at seven British locations. Issues investigated included identity, spirituality, congregational participation, hopes, worries, fears, parents, friends, substance use and right & wrong. Similarities between the two groups did not show particularly Buddhist content. Contrasts included values concerning life after death, Buddhist identifiers, place of congregation, hopes, parental formality, spiritual teachers, femininity, meditation and the Sangha, alcohol and marijuana. The study recommends social policy makers working with religious identifiers would benefit from an awareness of the complex dynamic of religious styles in respect of Buddhism shown in this research and that future research on Buddhist identity and values be clearly qualified by considerations of religious style.

Internal diversity in Buddhism: Comparing the values of Buddhist teens raised by heritage & convert parents

Introduction

When describing religion in numbers, statisticians have placed different degrees of importance on self-assigned religious affiliation. Nominal Christians have been shown by some to demonstrate values that stand on a continuum between practising Christians and non-Christians (Fane; Francis and Robbins), whereas for others affiliation must always be qualified by other measures of religiosity such as belief and place of worship attendance (Voas and Day; Voas and Bruce). For Buddhism in the West, studies of Buddhist religiosity have been able to employ self-identification only as a *starting* point, since a widely-described contrast has been revealed amongst Buddhist self-identifiers between ‘convert’ and ‘heritage’ styles of religiosity (Tweed; Hickey; Nattier). Practitioners of both styles call themselves ‘Buddhists’: but what this affiliation means to each group seems to have differences as well as similarities – and if the differences were to exceed the similarities, the usefulness of the blanket term ‘Buddhist’ in describing identity might be questioned. This study examines the nature of values associated with self-assigned Buddhist affiliation by making a qualitative examination of values expressed by teenage Buddhists brought up by either heritage or convert Buddhist parents.

Differences between the religious styles of convert and heritage Buddhists in the West were first recognized in studies of ‘parallel Buddhist congregations’ (Numrich). The ‘convert’ style of Buddhist religiosity is practised mostly by Caucasians or those who do *not* have

ancestry from Asia. It is a style of Buddhist practice that emphasizes meditation, tends to eschew monasticism, devotions, ethical Precepts and the worldly benefits of Buddhism and its social activities (Nattier, 42-49). Although the term ‘convert’ is traditionally associated with conversion by *agency* as in the Christian or Islamic traditions, more recent observation of conversion to Buddhism without an advocate encounter or proselytising agent (Gordon-Finlayson and Daniels) has popularized this term when describing those who have adopted Buddhism as their chosen religion without having been brought up within that tradition. This style of Buddhism seems to have dominated the academic discourse at the expense of the other ‘heritage’ style of religiosity, despite practitioners being arguably fewer in the UK: especially in the teen age-range of interest to this study.

A greater variety of alternative terms presents itself for the ‘heritage’ style of Buddhist religiosity (since the same community has been referred to variously as ‘immigrant’, ‘migrant’, ‘ethnic’, ‘cradle’, ‘old-line’ or ‘indigenous’ Buddhism)¹ is the religiosity of Buddhists connected ethnically with countries where Buddhism has a dominant presence. Typical practices for heritage-style Buddhists include generosity, chanting, meditation, listening to Dhamma sermons at a temple, bowing to the Sangha, taking temporary ordination as novice monks, showing respect towards parents, Buddhist iconography on shrines in the home, support for the Sangha, ceremonial marking of rites of passage and dedication of merit for deceased ancestors (Miller, 199).

¹ See Hickey for a summary of researchers using alternative terms for ‘heritage’ and comment on those terms’ relative political correctness

Both heritage and convert Buddhist communities are represented in the UK. Young heritage Buddhists can most easily be found at temples organizing youth activities, such as temple Sunday schools where an Asian language and cultural heritage are taught. More difficult to find in large numbers are teen convert Buddhists. The present author has encountered individual teenagers in Britain who have decided to become a Buddhist independent of any Buddhist upbringing. These would correctly be called 'convert Buddhist teenagers'. Since convert Buddhists have now entered a second generation in Britain, western-orientated Buddhist organizations in the UK are increasingly holding events specifically for youngsters: a small proportion of whom self-identify as Buddhists. Strictly, this latter group have been *brought up* 'Buddhist' by parents who are themselves converts and so in this article I have referred to them as convert-raised Buddhists (CRBs). This paper sets out to describe and attempt to account for similarities and differences between the values of self-identifying heritage Buddhists and CRBs.

Methodology

This study was conducted loosely within the framework of educational research, of necessity emphasizing young people. There are advantages and disadvantages in trying to reach general conclusions by conducting religious research with teenage participants rather than adults. Advantages include the opportunity to compare directly with established values research with non-Buddhists using similar questions and

methodology derived from the Centymca Attitude Inventory (e.g. Francis). Secondly, the values involved in secondary socialization are often most readily accessible to the researcher if studied through the lens of upbringing (Berger and Luckmann, 76). A third advantage from the point of view of psychology of religion, is that the teen age-range has also long been associated with an intensity of religious experience and identified as a 'watershed' where individuals adopt religious values that most often stay with them for the rest of their life (Pressey and Kuhlen). Disadvantages of trying to extrapolate between the values of young people and the general adult population is that ambitions might be immature, and would not touch on characteristically adult worries such as feeding a family or pension investments.

Procedure

Focus groups comprising 6-10 self-identifying Buddhist teenagers were held at Buddhist events attended by these young people in the period July 2011 to August 2012. The focus groups were held on 7 different Buddhist sites in Britain. The 34 questions discussed (see Appendix 1) were derived either from previous focus group research with religiously-undifferentiated teenagers (e.g. Halsall) or from the essays of American young Buddhists (Loundon, xvi). Focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim. Answers were coded under 39 subheadings using NVIVO software² (QSR) and then summarized down in array format to allow patterns to be drawn in overview. Results were triangulated further

² The NVIVO programme allows comments on similar topics scattered throughout a dialogue to be tagged and drawn together for analysis.

by ‘member checking’ (Richards, 140) where participants were given the chance to comment on the accuracy with which their views had been written up in a pre-press draft of this article. Although a quantitative measure was not the main goal, some indication of the strength of opinion can be gleaned from the degree of agreement between groups. Where I use the term ‘all’ or ‘unanimous’ it means all the groups agreed. Where I use the term ‘majority’ it means almost all the groups agreed. The terms ‘most’ or ‘many’ means more than half the groups agreed. The term ‘some’ means more than one group agreed. For focus groups, generally, data are expressed as the ‘voice of the group’, although where participants are quoted, they have been identified individually by pseudonyms.

Sample

The relative difficulty in finding willing CRB participants of the specified age range is reflected in the stratified nature of the sample. Seventy-five teenagers took part in this project in the age range 13-20. Sixty-five of the teenagers were drawn from Britain’s Sri Lankan, Thai, Burmese, Cambodian and Nepalese communities, and included teenagers of mixed race from intermarriage of Asian and Black or Asian and White parents. It should be mentioned that there were a significant number of heritage groups known to be present in the UK that could not be accessed in time for this study³ meaning Mahāyāna teens were almost completely absent from the sample. These would comprise heritage

³ Namely, Chinese, Vietnamese, Mongolian, Indian, Bangladeshi, Malaysian, Korean, Japanese, Tibetan, Bhutanese and Laotian.

Buddhists and mostly adherents to Theravāda Buddhist practice. The remaining ten were self-identified Buddhists brought up in Triratna Buddhist Community (TBC) convert Buddhist families. Not available for interview, although apparently well-established in the UK, for the CRB sample were New Kadampa Tradition (NKT) and Sōka Gakkai International–UK (SGI-UK) youth groups. The researcher, for the record, hedges the borderline between being a ‘convert’ Buddhist while ordained within the ‘heritage’ tradition of Theravāda Buddhism.

Findings

Findings are presented in this section under the headings of ‘being Buddhist’, religion versus spirituality, participation in Buddhist activities, hopes, worries & fears, parents, friends, substance use and right & wrong. These topic headings were arrived at by reference to Halsall’s system of ‘values areas’; essentially, groups of values questions grouped in themes that have previously elicited polarization of opinion in UK young people. Due to time-limited access to the CRBs who were on a retreat, not all of Halsall’s values areas could be touched upon. Topics omitted from this study due to time constraints included Asian heritage, politics and ‘my area’.

Being Buddhist

Participants were asked their definition of Buddhists and ‘proper’ Buddhists. The term ‘proper’ came up spontaneously in conversation with Buddhist teenagers in the present author’s previous research. Some teenagers had used the term to tease peers they considered more pious or

strict than themselves. The usage seemed to mirror the use of the term by Sikh children of a similar age (Nesbitt) although it referred to being towards the top of a sliding scale of intensity of practice rather than having undergone any particular rite of initiation or confirmation.

The results indicated that neither heritage Buddhists nor CRB believed in God; for some this meant not believing in the existence of God, but for most, it meant not believing in Creation or that a God figure had any *role* their salvation. Maya, a 15-year-old heritage girl asserted that Buddhists:

...don't believe in God, but...believe in the philosophy of life and how [it can be improved] through education and stuff.

Most of the heritage teenagers said Buddhists believed in rebirth, which according to Tea, a 15-year-old heritage girl, meant, "...that when people die, they are reborn, except for a few people who are on their final lifetime." The heritage Buddhists were more confident in the existence of life after death than CRBs. In the words of Rosaly, a 13-year-old CRB girl, "if you are Buddhist you don't have to believe in it [life after death] but you *can*."

Heritage Buddhists differed from CRBs in emphasising *practice*, especially the Five Precepts, as the main mark of Buddhist religiosity. According to Tony, a 13-year-old heritage boy:

If you obey the Five Precepts... it's like it makes you *almost* a proper Buddhist... [although]...there is a load of other things that you should do.

The CRBs, by contrast, emphasized their religiosity as an attitude of mind, in the words of Bob, a 15-year-old CRB boy:

You have your awareness and it makes you Buddhist; you don't have to do anything physical. It is a state of mind,

or in the words of Mike, a 13-year-old CRB boy, Buddhism, “....is helping you appreciate what you've already got and be[ing] content and truthful.”

Religiosity versus Spirituality

The researcher asked participants to define spirituality as distinct from religion anticipating distinctions in terms of believing with or without belonging as discussed in previous teen research (Day; Francis and Robbins; Davie). The results showed similarities and differences between heritage Buddhists and CRBs, although their explanations seemed to emphasize neither believing nor belonging. All the CRBs and many of the heritage Buddhists avoided calling Buddhism a religion, since they felt the word had negative associations. In the words of Freya, an 18-year-old CRB girl:

Religions are basically people *manipulating* people; well, I mean it is not the actual religions, but something *in* the religion,

and according to Mike, “religions are one of the biggest reasons the world is *so* messed up.” The CRBs used the phrase ‘trying to make yourself a better person’ to define *both* Buddhism and spirituality.

There were also differences between the two groups. Heritage Buddhists were hardly aware of the word ‘spirituality’ until beyond the age of 16. They thought ‘atheist’ was a more likely self-assigned category for those not adhering to the religious mainstream. Most heritage Buddhists considered Buddhism to be a religion and that religion was an ‘authorized’ subset of a much broader scope of ‘spiritual’ practices. Even the youngest CRBs, by contrast thought ‘spirituality’ a valid category and defined it as religious practices that didn’t fit the ‘off the peg package’ of any particular religion. Freya added:

In schools now, we are taught about a lot of different religions, and what we take from each religion, *can* be our spirituality...so it, kind of, allows more freedom, and yeah...it’s individual...a lot of my friends say they’re spiritual.

Rosalyn added that spiritual friends were, “...open minded and believe in some things, but they... don’t fit into [any] *one* religion.”

Participation in collective Buddhist activities

Asked about their attendance of collective Buddhist activities, the responses showed similarities and differences between heritage Buddhists and CRBs. Both groups agreed that meditation alone, as a practice, was not enough; in the words of Bob, what is important, “is meditation *and* putting it into practice...in your life.” Both groups also

agreed that their motivation for practice came from congregating with other Buddhists. In the words of Vari a 20-year-old heritage boy, “there is more motivation ...if you come to the temple; you *have* to listen.” Once motivated, the groups differed as to the easiest place to practise. Mike commented that:

It is easier to do something if you are by yourself...just after going to... [an event], when you are on your own,

whereas the heritage group found the temple also conducive to individual practice since according to Tea, “It is just more peaceful.”

Differences were also shown in the chosen *place* of congregation: heritage Buddhists favouring a temple,⁴ while CRBs preferred a Buddhist centre. Heritage Buddhists attended the temple to mark life events or Buddhist festivals and remarked on the sense of community. In the words of Maya there:

...is a *nice* community that we have in the temple. It is like something we can always depend on. It's by coming to the temple, like with any religious place, you *do* kind of become a part of the community and it is your second family. It is your 'family away from home.'

⁴ When heritage Buddhists refer to their congregation place as a 'temple', it is not just a choice of words to describe the same thing CRBs refer to as a 'meditation centre'. Although shrine rooms and meditation activities may be found both types of place, temples are home to a resident monastic community and may be registered as a 'place of worship' whereas meditation centres are places where a group meets and which is locked up behind them when they go home.

CRBs were more inclined to join together as a group for courses, events or retreats, but thought home practice to be a major component of their religiosity. The CRB and heritage Buddhists even differed in their definitions of what constituted meditation: something that might affect the place they would expect to practise it. According to Mike:

[Meditation is]...trying to see yourself without impurities...I think a lot of people *do* meditation without thinking of it as meditation.

The heritage Buddhists, by contrast, defined meditation more as a formalized sitting practice. In the words of Anusha, a 13-year-old heritage girl, meditation would mean:

sitting down for a while without thinking about the things that worry you and try [*sic*] to calm yourself down for a bit: sort of going blank – and enjoying the blankness.

Hopes

Participants were asked about their greatest hope. The results showed similarities and differences between heritage Buddhists and CRBs. The only hope shared between the two groups was for world peace.

Aside from world peace, many differences were apparent between the two groups: with heritage Buddhists also hoping for many other environmental and economic upturns in the world. For the CRBs, there was a noticeable lack of any hopes on personal, family and religious levels compared to the heritage Buddhists who mentioned

examples in all categories. The CRBs seemed more disillusioned, with Bob observing:

our hopes have gone downhill, haven't they? It is like the more you find out
[about the world] the worse it is really.

By contrast, the heritage Buddhists seemed happier to play along with an imperfect system or at least make the best of it. That this is due to a different parenting style or linked variables other than religious style is examined further in the discussion section.

Worries and fears

Participants were asked about their greatest fears, worries and what they would like to change about the world. The results showed similarities and differences between the heritage and CRBs. Both groups admitted personal worries including relationships and personal safety: in the words of Shauna, a 14-year-old CRB girl:

I don't like walking home when it's dark in the night in London...there are so many people who have been stabbed.

Also mentioned was their future and exams with Mike adding:

I think a lot of schools nowadays are a lot more worried about their [own] reputation, than about what options *you*'ve got.

They also shared fears including the end of the world, and a sense of helplessness towards commercially-sanctioned mistreatment of animals. Although the researcher asked about fears in the context of fox-hunting, the teenagers were quick to point out that fox-hunting was less emotive to them than widespread commercial practices. In the words of Rosaly, “I think with fox-hunting it is easier to stop than things like factory farming.”

Both groups were most concerned about people’s abuse of each other: in the words of Freya:

I think that the things people have *made* happen to other people... that have made other people suffer... [are the worst].

Differences between the two groups included the greater mention by CRBs of family worries such as their relationship with their parents and by heritage Buddhists of religious worries such as turning into a bad person. Other differences included a seemingly lower degree of worry amongst CRBs concerning rivalry at school: In the words of Bob, “at my age, it is like everyone is trying to get *on* with it and do well.” Also there seemed to be a greater feeling of helplessness, amongst CRBs concerning fears stimulated by the television news: for example Shauna opined, “on the news, you always see, like, ‘You are going to die of terrorists’.”

Parents

Participants were asked about their relationship to and influence of their parents and the things their parents disapproved of. They were also asked whether they had particular ways of showing respect to their parents and whether they had a plan for looking after aging parents. The results showed similarities and differences between the heritage Buddhists and CRBs. Both groups agreed their parents disapproved of smoking and were the main source of advice on Buddhist nurture: in the words of Bob,

I have a lot of things my parents have done that I would have wanted to be a part of...if I'd been brought up by different parents, I would have completely different thoughts on life and everything.

There were several points of difference between the two groups. Heritage Buddhists differed from CRBs in having a more formal, but harmonious relationship with their parents: being pushed hard by their parents to achieve good study grades. For CRBs, the relationship with parents was comparatively informal but worrisome. Where heritage Buddhist parents reinforced a traditional idea of femininity in their daughters, the convert parents seemed to encourage a more liberated view of femininity. Speaking politely and being helpful was a part of heritage Buddhists' respect towards parents. By contrast, CRBs wanted to treat their parents as equals. All heritage Buddhist groups had

teenagers who showed respect by bowing to their parents⁵ either on a daily basis or once a year on their own birthday anniversary. The heritage Buddhist teenagers wanted to look after parents in old age: a wish that was not expressed to the same extent amongst the CRBs.

Friends

Participants were asked about peer pressure, whether friends were useful to confide in, the importance of a spiritual teacher and the meaning of the words ‘Sangha’ and ‘Sangha Day’. Similarities and differences were found between heritage and CRB attitudes to friends. Both groups agreed that good friends were those that did not pressure you to do things against your will and that friends gave better advice than parents on matters of sexual orientation and relationship problems: as Mike explained, you go to your, “...friends; if you’ve got relationship problems, you wouldn’t go to your parents.” Both groups of Buddhist teenagers mentioned that keeping closely to Buddhist teachings often helped them resist unwelcome peer pressure. In the words of Rhiannon, a 14-year-old CRB girl, “It’s like, I just be myself and I don’t really care if they judge me, because I’m just ‘me’.”

In terms of differences, heritage Buddhists gave much greater importance to having a spiritual teacher than CRBs. Heritage teenagers said they would miss out a *lot* without one, because in the words of Maung Pyar Zang, a 14-year-old heritage boy, “...book[s] don’t really persuade you to have faith in your religion.” Spiritual teachers also

⁵ Literally, not figuratively. See Thanissaro (p. 296) for clarification of what is entailed by bowing to parents.

challenged students to think about moral choices and *answered* their questions more convincingly. CRBs by contrast found spiritual teachers comparatively unimportant: Freya saying that her source for teachings was, "...more the books." Heritage Buddhists reserved the word 'Sangha' mostly for the community of Buddhist monks whereas for CRBs the word included the wider community of lay Buddhist practitioners and gave little or no importance to monks. Although the word 'Sangha Day' seems elusive; it has been construed as sufficiently mainstream a term to measure attitude to Buddhism in previous educational research (Smith and Kay, 190). The present research showed the term to be recognized *only* in the case of the TBC CRBs, with Luna, a 16-year-old TBC girl explaining, "I [once] made a cake which said 'Happy Sangha Day' ...it is like a *day* for ... Buddhist community."

Substance Use

Participants were asked where they would draw the line with consumption of alcohol, tobacco and drugs. Similarities and differences were found between the attitudes of the Buddhist teenage groups towards intoxicants. Both groups agreed that smoking tobacco was undesirable and were not tempted to do so. The heritage Buddhists said they considered smoking addictive, surplus to needs, deadly (grandparents had died of lung cancer) and associated it with depression. Some added they would not want to marry a smoker.

Some differences were also apparent between the two groups. About half the heritage Buddhists claimed zero-tolerance concerning the consumption of alcohol or drugs, while the remainder thought drinking

alcohol in moderation was acceptable. CRBs, by contrast, *all* thought consumption of alcohol was acceptable in moderation: in the words of Bob, “I drink because it is *nice*,” with Ruben adding that he would, “drink it [alcohol] *not* to get drunk.” According to Shauna, drinking alcohol was only *unacceptable*, “...if you do it to, like, hide bad stuff – like you’re unhappy...” The heritage Buddhist teenagers thought drinking alcohol pointless as it made you hyperactive, drunk, lose control, depressed and attract community derision. Heritage Buddhists felt pressured by peers to ‘drink to be social’, but several said they would rather drink soft drinks and *pretend* to be drunk. The CRBs were also permissive towards soft drugs (marijuana). They thought such drugs acceptable in moderation with the warning from Kenith, a 15-year-old CRB boy that, “you’ve got to be careful” and Rosaly adding that marijuana, “is not as bad as people make it out to be.” By contrast, none of the heritage teenagers wanted even to *experiment* with marijuana, although they had witnessed peers smoking it. According to Anusha, “drugs and stuff would be right at the bottom of [the list of] being pointless.” Other heritage teens associated drugs with homelessness and observed that drugs have now become more prevalent amongst young people in Asia than parents realize.

Right and Wrong

Participants were asked which behaviours they considered were treated too trivially or too seriously by the Law and their impression of the police. Similarities and differences were found between heritage and

CRB Buddhists in their perception of legal rights and wrongs. Both groups considered rape should be punished more severely and both groups had negative attitudes towards police conduct: Mike citing first-hand examples of police partiality,

I think laws about people are definitely overruled by the police and it is definitely not right that anyone should be above the law.

As many heritage Buddhists agreed the police did a good job as disagreed: the remaining groups saying the police probably did everything they could. Those who admired the police said it was probably the best service in the world, if compared with the corruption of Sri Lanka or Thailand. Those disappointed by the police pointed to evidence of unprofessional behaviour captured on Youtube, failing to act on evidence in race-related cases, failure to stamp out drugs in their school and generally being left feeling unsafe on the night-time city streets.

Some differences were also apparent in the perceptions of right and wrong by the two groups. The heritage Buddhists considered laws on immigration, copyright and human rights to be over-severely punished, but had more of a comparative overview of the differences between laws in different parts of the world. Of the CRBs, Shauna thought the laws had gone overboard, imprisoning teenagers for looting during the 2011 London riots, “people were being given long, long jail sentences for stealing trainers and stuff.”

Discussion

This study is the first time in Britain that the contrast between heritage and CRB Buddhist values has been explored. It highlights new understandings concerning different styles of Buddhist religiosity and their consequences for values specifically in young people. It observes that there is a difference in upbringing between the two styles of Buddhist religiosity together with a difference in values visible from the teen years. The values observed still beg questions about Buddhist identity, however, some of which were voiced even by participants themselves. Joseph, a 17-year-old heritage boy wondered whether Buddhism is:

...just *one* lifestyle or is it...one of many lifestyles? Is it something that you centre your life around or is it just something that you call yourself?

Buddhist internal homogeneity and diversity

As mentioned at the outset, simply calling oneself a ‘Buddhist’ may not accurately predict values held. The commonalities in values between heritage and CRB Buddhists share some Buddhist patterns in a way that transcended the CRB/heritage boundary. As shown in Table 1, the shared values include atheism, hoping for world peace, belief in rebirth, liking to associate with other Buddhists and considering meditation alone insufficient as a practice. This set of values is, however, arguably not exclusive to Buddhists. They could just as easily have been found in non-Buddhist peers.

Table 1. Summary of Buddhist internal diversity

<i>Similarities between heritage- & convert-raised Buddhists</i>	
atheism	
hoping for world peace	
belief in rebirth	
liking to associate with other Buddhists	
meditation alone as a practice is insufficient	
<i>Contrasts</i>	
<i>Heritage</i>	<i>Convert-Raised</i>
Confident in life after death	Open to life after death
Practice (5 Precepts) as main identifier of Buddhism	Attitude of mind as main identifier of Buddhism
Congregate at temples	Congregate at centres, events
Meditation as formal sitting practice	Meditation as awareness in the moment
Hopeful	Disillusioned
Formal family relations including provisions for respect and care of parents in old age, pushed hard in studies. Fewer family worries	Informal family relations, more family worries
Spiritual teachers more important than books	Books more important than spiritual teachers
Traditional female roles	Liberated female roles
Sangha primarily monastic	Sangha primarily lay
Zero tolerance for alcohol and marijuana	Alcohol and marijuana acceptable in moderation
Buddhism as religion, philosophy, lifestyle, atheism	Buddhism as spirituality

More interesting perhaps are the *contrasts* between heritage and CRB teenagers confirming those described in the previous studies cited above, that have already noted CRB emphasis on meditation, eschewing monasticism, devotion, the ethical Precepts and looking down on worldly benefits of Buddhism and its social activities. Additional contrasts revealed in this study summarized in Table 1 include values concerning life after death, identifiers of being Buddhist, place of congregation, definition of meditation, hopes, formality of family relations, the role of spiritual teachers, view of femininity, definition of the Sangha, tolerance of alcohol and marijuana and categorization of

Buddhism. This paper can conclude that there *is* a real difference between the attitudes with which heritage and convert teen Buddhists have been raised.

Accounting for differences in Buddhist style

Religious labels have might be thought to be carried around by Buddhist like a wrist thread or an amulet. The complexity of self-ascribed affiliation for a Buddhist seems to go beyond such nominalism, however, as is demonstrated by the two groups in this research who both call themselves Buddhists: perhaps leaning towards the Voas interpretation of the limited predictive power of self-ascribed religious affiliation in the case of Buddhist values. In view of the contrasts highlighted, it may not be useful to try to reach an essentialized view of Buddhist identity by studying a sample mixed between heritage and CRB. Although, this paper has set out mostly to *describe* difference rather than to explain it, possible antecedents for difference in Buddhist style could nonetheless be accounted for by any of the following three possibilities or combinations of them:

1. *location of legitimation in a resident community*: The places a particular group invests with power, meaning and authority differ from group to group (Day; Knott). Heritage Buddhists certainly seem to invest greater authority in spiritual teachers and the monastic Sangha than the CRBs who prefer books. Heritage Buddhists emphasise the temple (i.e. a place with a resident spiritual

leader/community) as their main location of religion, whereas for CRBs, the events themselves seem to hold more importance than the venue. Catholic students have similarly been shown to refer to their practice as either religiosity or spirituality depending on how much importance they vest in ‘community’, particularly *residential* community (Overstreet, 257); the same phenomena could be extrapolated to explain contrasts since the two groups invest different degrees of importance in the resident monastic Sangha.

2. *identity generated by different forms of cleavage*: That identity forms in reaction to undesirable alternatives is the basis of the cleavage model of value change (Lipset and Rokkan). Since the two groups have become Buddhist in counterpoint to different sets of social alternatives would be shown particularly by the difference in behaviours disallowed by parents in the two groups. For heritage Buddhists behaviours disallowed were those threatening their minority community values, or shoring up resistance identity against relativism (Frisk and Nynäs, 57) whereas for CRB Buddhists alternatives defended against might emphasize ‘not selling out to pop culture’ similar to the phenomenon described for British Paganism (Lassander, 253). Difference in Buddhist identity between heritage and CRB Buddhists could therefore be explained by cleavage with different aspects of mainstream culture.
3. *undetected confounding variables*: The variable of ‘religious style’ may be more or less inextricable from a package of other variables including parental style (authoritarian and social conscience on the

heritage side, more informal parenting on the convert side), strictness of practice, ethnicity and Buddhist denomination. Although differences observed between the two experimental groups are real, the differences may not be attributable entirely to religious style. Ethnological studies of religion in the UK have found more accuracy is gained in describing religious phenomena where a layered approach is used. Layering of identity according to the tripartite hermeneutic of the interpretive approach gives independent consideration to the contributions of individual, membership group and religious tradition to identity (Jackson, 65). Such an approach highlights the importance of acknowledging the influence of broad ethnic groups when seeking to explain observed differences in religious behaviour. The same layered interpretation could be applied potentially not only to the ethnicity and religious tradition of participants but also the level of participation and parental style to quantify relative contributions to observed value differences.

Possible implications of findings for social policy

Implications for social policy point to a need for care when making assumptions that essentialize the nature of Buddhist religiosity in teens, without considering other possibly independent influences on social attitudes such as the parenting style, strictness of practice, ethnicity and Buddhist denomination. It is interesting to speculate that if Buddhist identity features cannot be concluded by looking at the commonalities, whether Buddhism for teens is displaying two types of religiosity that

bear no real resemblance to one another. If observations are made about Buddhist identity or Buddhist values in general, it is recommended that they be qualified by a description of the Buddhist style, belief and place of worship attendance of the Buddhists participating in the research; it would be misleading otherwise to reify Buddhist identity in a way that transcends cultural and ethnic boundaries.

A second aspect worth consideration in social policy-making is that the inclusivity and community in both Buddhist communities echoes Nicolaisen's findings for Hindu children in Norway, emphasis on practice rather than belief or ideals and going beyond text-based or blind faith, and this might have consequences for the way Buddhism is portrayed in the Religious Studies classroom. Postsecularism moves our understanding away from the 'melting-pot' ethos of acculturation. Buddhism's presence the West which for both heritage and CRB communities is now in its second generation may be leaving a particularly wide generation gap to bridge in acculturation (Farver, Narang and Bhadha, 347) and possibly leading to behavioural difficulties that for reasons of religious upbringing are different in nature to those of adolescents in the mainstream culture (Weisz et al.), or learning difficulties where unable to connect with both aspects of their identities (Feliciano). This research has shown distinctive differences in religious styles across heritage and convert groups. Educators involved in presenting Buddhism in the classroom and teaching young Buddhists might benefit from a more nuanced understanding of these differences. Similarly, social policy makers working with religious identifiers would

benefit from an awareness of the complex dynamic of religious styles in respect of Buddhism shown in this research.

Suggestions for further research

In future research, control for the potentially confounding variables of parenting style, strictness of practice, ethnicity and Buddhist denomination could be better achieved by a quantitative approach rather than the qualitative approach of this study. Quantitative cross-tabulation of these variables against values to form a general theory of how Buddhist identity combines with other aspects of cultures or values would be the best way to leverage a ‘layered’ approach.

Furthermore, this study has been limited mainly to Theravāda Buddhist teens from the heritage Buddhists and TBC teens from the converts. There are significant groups of both heritage Buddhists (see footnote 3) and of convert Buddhists (SGI-UK, NKT) that have been omitted owing to lack of appropriate gatekeepers to facilitate research. If future research can redress this lack, it would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the intra-Buddhist differences in values. (Hickey) (Thanissaro)

(6830 words – including refs. and footnotes)

Appendix 1: Focus group questions asked

1. Define ‘being Buddhist’.
2. If someone told you they had met a ‘proper’ Buddhist, what do you think such a person would be like?
3. Would you go to a temple for certain life events?
4. Can you practise Buddhism as well on your own as you can with a group?
5. What does the word ‘spirituality’ mean to you?

6. What does the word 'religion' mean to you?
7. What does the word 'meditation' mean to you?
8. Is meditation the only important practice in Buddhism?
9. What is your greatest hope?
10. What is your greatest fear?
11. What fears do you have concerning a) the environment; b) war; c) fox-hunting; d) violence; e) guns; f) greed and pride in society?
12. What worries you?
13. What makes you panic?
14. Do you have worries about attractiveness to the opposite sex?
15. Do you have worries about personal safety?
16. Do you have worries about rivalry at school?
17. What would you change if you could change one thing about the world?
18. Do you find it useful to confide in your parents?
19. Do you get on well with your parents?
20. Do you feel your parents influence you?
21. Do your parents disapprove of particular things?
22. Do you have a particular way you would show respect to your parents?
23. Do you have any particular plan for how you'd treat your parents in their old age?
24. Do you think you would be missing out on something if you had no spiritual teacher?
25. Are you influenced or pressurized by your friends?
26. Do you find it helpful to confide in your friends?
27. What does the word 'Sangha' mean to you?
28. What does the word 'Sangha Day' mean to you?
29. Where would you draw the line with drinking alcohol?
30. Where would you draw the line with smoking?
31. Where would you draw the line with drugs?
32. Are there laws you consider serious which are not punished enough?
33. Are there laws you consider trivial which are punished too severely?
34. Do the police do a good job?

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